

# 1 Corinthians 13 and Temporary Gifts

Paul's basic argument in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 is as follows:

THERE ARE THREE THINGS THAT WILL **FAIL** (verse 8).

These are the less important things.

THERE ARE THREE THINGS THAT WILL **REMAIN** (verse 13).

These are the more important things.

THERE IS ONE THING THAT WILL **NEVER FAIL** (verse 8).  
IT WILL REMAIN FOREVER (verse 13).

This is the most important thing (verse 13)  
and therefore this is what we are to  
follow after (1 Corinthians 14:1).

**Note:** "Knowledge" (verse 8) should not be confused with knowledge in general. This verse refers to the special gift of knowledge (see 1 Corinthians 12:8 and 13:2). The gifts of knowledge and wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8) were special revelatory gifts which were needed in the days prior to the completed New Testament. Imagine a local church today trying to survive without the New Testament Scriptures as a pattern and guide! Divine knowledge and wisdom were essential during the infancy period of the early church. Today "all truth" which is necessary for the godly walk of believers has been recorded on the pages of the completed Bible (compare John 16:13).

**Note:** In 1 Corinthians 13:10 we have the expression "that which is perfect." To understand this word we need to see how it is used in the New Testament.

It is used in the following passages: Matthew 5:48 (twice); 19:21; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:6; 13:10; 14:20 ("men"); Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:15; Colossians 1:28; 4:12; Hebrews 5:14 ("full age"), 9:11; James 1:4 (twice); 1:17,25; 3:2; 1 John 4:8.

In light of this usage, the word seems to carry two basic ideas:

1) the idea of **MATURITY** (see especially 1 Corinthians 2:6; 14:20; Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:28; 4:12; Hebrews 5:14; James 3:2). Often this idea is in contrast with the idea of the immaturity of children (see 1 Corinthians 13:11; 14:20; Ephesians 4:13-14; Hebrews 5:13-14).

2) the idea of **COMPLETENESS** (see Colossians 4:12; James 1:4).

We should also note that this word is used to describe the Bible in James 1:25--"the perfect law of liberty."

The chart on the reverse side of this sheet may help in understanding Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.

The early Church of the first century	The Church during the ensuing centuries of church history	The Church in heaven (the eternal state)
The Church's infancy and childhood.	The Church growing and developing and maturing.	The Church reaching absolute maturity or perfection.
The Church receives revelation in a partial, "piecemeal" fashion (God's truth coming "bit by bit" in a fragmentary manner)--see verse 9.	The Church possesses God's full revelation--the completed Bible (all 66 Books).	The Church at home with the Lord, face to face with Christ our Saviour, enjoying His Person and Presence.
<p style="text-align: center;">↓ ↓ ↓</p> The gifts of prophecy tongues and knowledge are in force. These are revelatory gifts.	<p style="text-align: center;">↓ ↓ ↓</p> The gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge have <i>failed, ceased</i> and <i>vanished away</i> (verse 8).  These are the "childish things" which the childish Corinthians were making such a big fuss over.	<p style="text-align: center;">↓ ↓ ↓</p> There is no need for the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge in the eternal state.
The virtues of faith, hope and love are needed.	The virtues of faith, hope and love <u>remain</u> (verse 13).	Faith and hope do not remain in the eternal state. They are replaced by sight (see 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1; Rom. 8:24-25).

**"Love Never Fails"  
(verse 8)**

Love REMAINS throughout eternity and is therefore the "GREATEST" of the virtues (verse 13).

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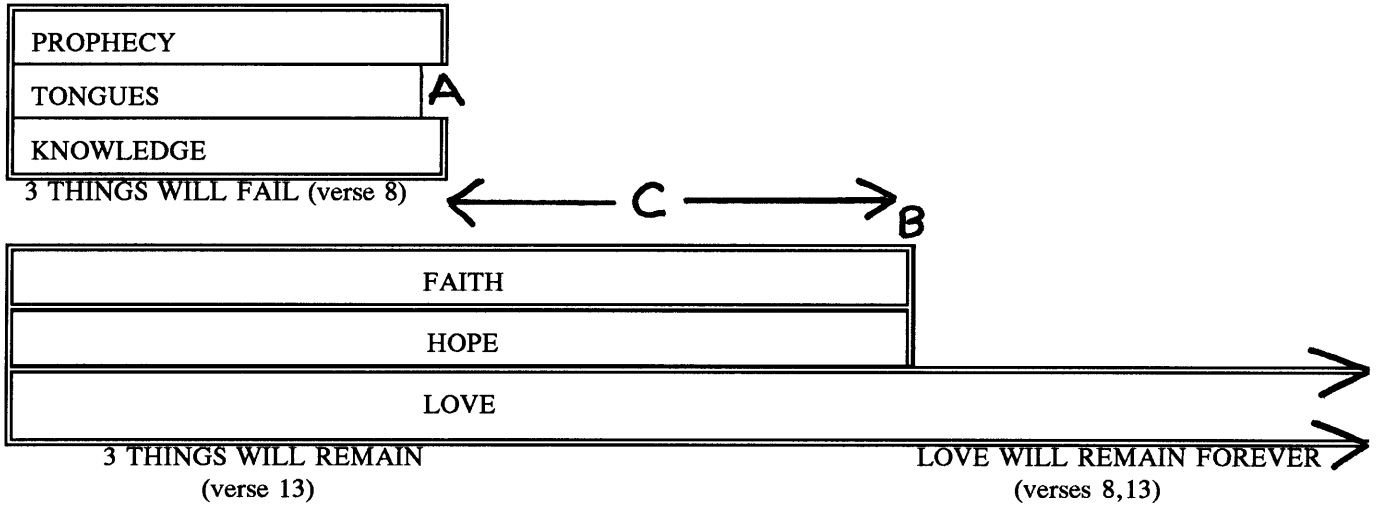
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**Compare These Two Models**  
Which Model Best Explains the Biblical and Historical Facts?

**The Fundamentalist Position**  
(The Three Gifts Are Temporary)

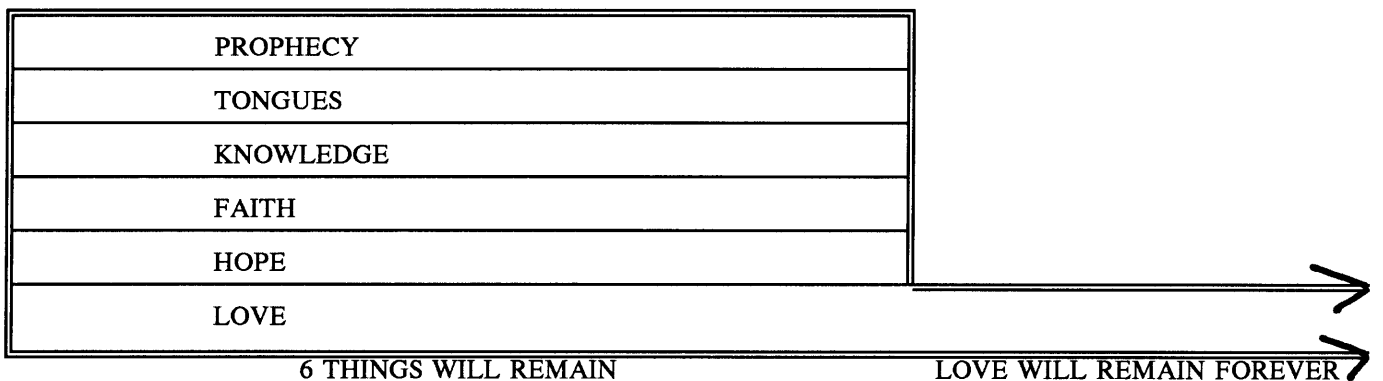


- A = termination of the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge
- B = termination of faith and hope (as the believer is with the Lord)
- C = a period of time during which there will be no prophecy/tongues/knowledge but there will be faith/hope/love

Identification of the periods:

- 1) THE APOSTOLIC AGE (1st Century) - the period when there will be prophecy/tongues/knowledge
- 2) THE PRESENT AGE (from the end of the first century to the rapture of the church), see "C" above
- 3) THE FUTURE AGE when believers are with the Lord (and there will be no need for faith and hope then).

**The Charismatic Position**  
(The Three Gifts Are Permanent)



Identification of two discernable periods:

- 1) **THE PRESENT AGE** (from Pentecost to the Lord's coming). Throughout this present age we are to expect the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge to be in effect as well as the virtues of faith, hope and love.
- 2) **THE FUTURE AGE** when believers are with the Lord. There will be no need for prophecy, tongues, knowledge, faith and hope then.

Which of these two views (the FUNDAMENTALIST POSITION or the CHARISMATIC POSITION) better explains the statements of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13?